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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BRASILIA 000056

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TAGS: [KCRM](#) [KJUS](#) [PGOV](#) [BR](#)

SUBJECT: BRAZIL: LESS GUNS, MORE BUTTER: LULA TAKES ON
CRIME (PART 2 OF 3)

REF: A. A. BRASILIA 000035

[B. B. BRASILIA 000761](#)

[C. C. SAO PAULO 000873](#)

[D. D. RECIFE 000087](#)

Classified By: DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION PHIL CHICOLA FOR REASONS 1.4 B A
ND D

[1](#). (C) Summary: As part of the Lula government's plan to take on the crime issue, the government proposed a multi-pronged plan to address both the social causes of crime and the weakness of the law enforcement community to fight it. Lula's proposal, the National Program on Public Security with Citizenship (PRONASCI) seeks in the first instance to address the social roots of Brazil's crime problem (Ref A). But it also attempts to tackle the most often heard complaints about Brazil's fractious state-level law enforcement structure: its corrupt nature, its use of excessive violence, and its appalling inefficiency in solving criminal cases. The program focuses on improving the various state police forces through education and technical training, a focus that, although necessary, will only bear fruit over the long-term and promises little relief to a Brazilian populace increasingly fed up with the ineffectual actions of all levels of government. In addition, the program punts on the problem of overcrowded prisons teeming with criminal gangs that control narcotrafficking networks in the cities--proposing to build less than half the number of prisons necessary to meet current demand--and ignores the judicial sector altogether. Observers agree that, while the law enforcement measures in PRONASCI were necessary and long-overdue, the program avoided making hard choices with regard to law enforcement and, as a result, fails as a meaningful response to the public security crisis.

[2](#). (U) This cable is one in a series by Mission Brazil on crime issues at both the national and regional levels (reftels). Septel will address the potential role of the military in solving Brazil's growing public security concerns.

The Police as Part of the Problem

[3](#). (SBU) A consistent theme echoed by government officials,

public security analysts, and the media is the poor and varying quality of the state police forces. Collectively, Brazilian police forces are among the least effective in the world. Although no official public statistics are available, "Veja" reported in October 2005 that Brazilian police forces solve only 3% of the more than 40,000 yearly homicide cases. Figures from this year's Annual Survey of the Brazilian Forum on Public Security show that Military Police forces in many states have an inadequate educational background. In some of the largest states such as Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, and Pernambuco, 70%, 41%, and 33% of the Military Police forces of those states, respectively, lack a high school degree. In the best states, Parana and Sergipe, the figures are 13% and 16%, respectively. Balestreri, told poloff that fragmentation of the public security system--27 military police forces and 27 civil police forces, not including municipal guards--with their vastly differing capabilities, makes the task of improving public security at the national level even more complicated. Some state police academies suffer from poor curricula, have barely functioning crime labs, and offer very little by way of technical training. (Note: In Brazil, law enforcement functions at the state level are conducted by two separate corps of police forces. The military police is the regular uniformed police and the civil police conducts investigations. End note.)

14. (C) A central focus of the Lula government in crafting PRONASCI was the need to improve the police forces of the states--to make them more efficient, less prone to using excessive force, and make them more accountable to the people. Director of Research for the Ministry of Justice's National Secretariat for Public Security (SENASP) Ricardo Balestreri told poloff that with PRONASCI the government

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wants to send the message that previous approaches focused solely on increasing the numbers and firepower of the police were wrong-headed. In the GOB,s view, Brazil already has enough policemen (490 per 100,000 people, according to the Annual Survey of the Brazilian Forum for Public Security compared to approximately 285 per 100,000 in the United States using 2004 figures) and its police forces kill enough presumed criminals--in Rio de Janeiro alone, according to official state figures, police operations led to the deaths of 870 people through the first nine months of 2007. Balestreri said that there has been no impact on crime rates to show for these deaths, proving that purely repressive policies do not work. The missing variables in the public security debate, he said, have been the social context and the effectiveness of the police. With regard to the latter, Balestreri said the government is putting its bets on enhancing the skills of police officers and changing their mentality.

Back to School

15. (U) Through PRONASCI, the Federal Government is stepping into the breach by strengthening the National Network of Advanced Studies in Public Security (RENAESP) through which the Public Security Secretariat is partnering with universities in creating graduate programs for public security professionals. RENAESP is available to military and civil police, fire fighters, and municipal guards as a graduate degree in public security with coursework on human rights, ethics, sociology, investigative techniques, use of statistics, evidence gathering, toxicology, DNA, ballistics, intelligence, conflict mediation, and forensic science. Currently offered in 22 universities in fifteen states plus the federal district, with 1600 students, PRONASCI will expand RENAESP to 80 universities by the end of 2008. PRONASCI also calls for establishment of 140 distance learning centers within police facilities, on top of the 60 already in existence, for officers to undertake courses in substantive subject matter such as trafficking in persons and

money laundering.

¶6. (U) PRONASCI also creates a "Bolsa Formacao" to address the poor salaries of police officers, and particularly the disparity in salaries between the states, by providing 400 reais (about USD 230) for police officers with salaries of up to 1,400 reais (about USD 800) per month. In exchange, the officer must participate every twelve months in courses approved by RENAESP. According to Balestreri, in 4 to 5 years with the training through PRONASCI's programs, "we will have critical mass that will change fundamentally the way the police works."

¶7. (U) Another program created under PRONASCI will give housing assistance to more than 60,000 state military and civil police officers that live in high-crime areas in order to encourage and disseminate the concept of community policing throughout Brazil.

Prison Building Ramp-Up Still Not Enough

¶8. (U) PRONASCI will provide funding for the construction and improvement of 187 prisons for 33,400 men and 4,400 women, a quantity far too small to effectively deal with the severe overcrowding problem in Brazilian prisons. According to the Forum's Annual Survey, official government data show that in 2006 there were more 100 thousand more inmates than spaces for them in Brazilian prisons--a figure most public security analysts dispute as far too low. Sociologist Julita Lemgruber, for example, recently wrote that anybody who had visited a Brazilian prison would quickly realize that the officially reported rate of 1.4 prisoners per each available space is completely unreliable and that the figure is almost certainly higher (Human Rights Watch put the number at 1.7 in its 2006 report).

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Avoiding Tough Issues

¶9. (C) For some observers, the Lula government lacked ambition in crafting its plan. For starters PRONASCI does little to improve the reliability of crime statistics, which many observers believe understate the severity of Brazil's crime problem. Alexandre Sankiewicz, Legislative Consultant on Criminal Justice issues for the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies, told poloff that neither national nor state-level data is trustworthy, as governors manipulate crime statistics and police precincts do not register all events. Supporting Sankiewicz's point, according to this year's Annual Survey of the Brazilian Forum for Public Security, state governments reported 40,975 murders, while the Ministry of Health reported 47,578, some 15 percent more. Fixing this reporting problem would not only help in strategic planning, but would take away control over information from state governors.

¶10. (C) Federal Deputy, William Woo (PSDB, Social Democracy Party, opposition; of Sao Paulo), and a career Civil Police officer, told poloff that PRONASCI fails to deal adequately with police corruption. Conditions for police officers in Brazil--low pay, little to no money for training or maintenance of vehicles, high-risk of getting killed--are such that it is almost impossible not to be corrupt. PRONASCI, however, deals with the problem only by providing financial incentives for police officers to tempt them away from corrupt practices. It provides few resources to actively combat police corruption. As a result, Woo sees PRONASCI as less a public security plan than a social welfare program with a few public security programs thrown in.

¶11. (SBU) Another problem PRONASCI fails to address is weaknesses in the judicial branch, and the impunity such

inefficiency breeds. The initial judicial process on homicide cases take on average 10-12 years to be concluded, according to various news sources. Furthermore, Brazil lacks a sufficient number of judges (5.3 per 100,000, about half the rate in the US) and its procedural code is unwieldy and in need of streamlining, in Sankiewicz,s view.

Comment

¶12. (C) While PRONASCI contains thoughtful initiatives to bolster law enforcement that merit support and may well achieve a measure success--including the educational and training programs included within RENAESP--PRONASCI appears to be another missed opportunity for a government that has often proved timid on matters of domestic reform. Rather than presenting a truly comprehensive solution to what everyone agrees is a calamitous problem, the government has instead nibbled at its edges with an approach that seems designed to cater to its leftist base--from educational programs to cash-handouts to social projects. The net result is a plan that allows the government to say it has taken action, while avoiding many of the tough issues and keeping primary responsibility for providing public security at the state level. PRONASCI succeeds primarily in legitimizing both the argument that there are socio-cultural aspects to reducing crime that have long-been neglected and, the growing acceptance of an expanded role for the federal government in improving public security. These were hurdles that needed jumping in order to tackle the problem in a long-term fashion. But in concrete policy terms PRONASCI fails in its principal goal--to offer hope to a populace hungry for results that a more effective police force might succeed in reducing crime in the near future.

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